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Ecological Atonement in Fresh Kills: From Landfill to Landscape

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INTRODUCTION

The city is more than infrastructure, technology and text, it is a place where natural forces push and pull on the built and lived environment to create any one moment. These naturally occurring moments are filled with people who live, feel, think and dream, thus the urban aesthetic must be rooted in the normal processes of nature. These processes of nature embedded in the urban aesthetic should link function, feeling and meaning to engage the senses and the mind (Spirn 1988, 108). The city is comprised of both the natural and the contrived, we, as humans transform the "wild" into a nature that serves human needs. This tendency towards nature is a testament to the fact that humans require these processes of nature to be reflected in the urban environment; it is through the construction of green spaces within the city where these processes manifest themselves. Olmstead, in reference to Central Park, describes the function of green space as “lungs for the city.” This notion of green space as a functional component of the urban is a central element to the construction of nature. As this principle remains the same, the motives, aesthetics, character and implementation of nature with the urban have evolved over the past 150 years in New York City.

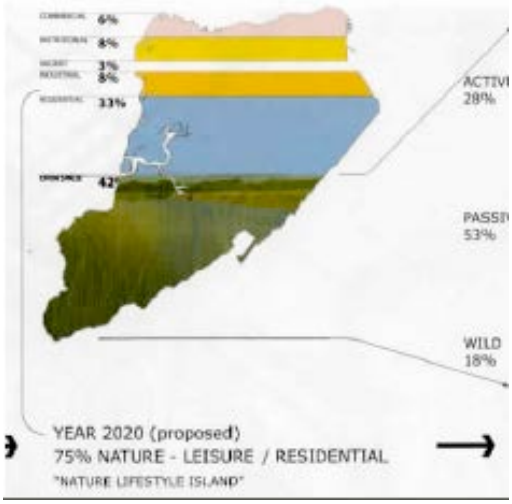
Twelve years ago when Fresh Kills landfill, located in Staten Island finally closed, officials repurposed the land for a park, more specifically, “nature and recreation.” By 2001, following the landfill’s closure, an international design competition for the redevelopment of the site was underway (Pollack 2007, 87). The challenge to reconstruct this space embraced a multitude of subjects:

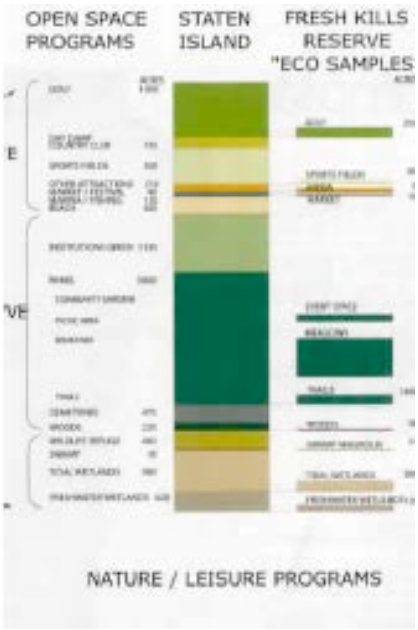
scale, economy of means, ecology, sociology, transportation and engineering.

Ultimately, the winner of this competition, Field Operations in collaboration with the New York City Department of City Planning, created a plan to transform the former landfill site into one of the city's largest parks – an act of ecological atonement.[1]Field Operations winning submission will be constructed over the next 30 years.

The rezoning of this space from industrial use to nature and recreation marks a significant shift in Staten Island's land use (Praxis 2002, 20). The repurposing of Fresh Kills serves as another example of New York's long history of using landscape design to re-naturalize space that bears the scars of exploitative industrial use. By masking the undesirable and unnatural with landscape design we are exercising society's power to bring abused land back to life.

This desire for redemption transforms the space of Fresh Kills into a symbol of healing and an example of





Staten Island land use (Praxis 2002, 21)

[1] The name Fresh Kills Landfill will change to Freshkills Park, since the park has yet to be realized I will refer to the space as "Fresh Kills" throughout this project.

ecological atonement. I define ecological atonement as a belief that all abused space can be reinvented biologically, ecologically and aesthetically to heal the scars of the past. Through this paper I explore how Fresh Kills operates as an act of ecological atonement specifically through the re-conceptualization of the notion of nature in present day New York City.

The reinvention of Fresh Kills is seen as a catalyst for the reshaping of the identity of Staten Island. The proposed identity constructed by Field Operations transforms the borough once known as an industrial wasteland into a place both desirable for tourists and residents alike (Praxis 2002, 20). The transformation seen through function and aesthetics is based on the idea of reinserting nature into an urban environment. For the purpose of clarity, the urban environment refers to the human made surroundings that provide a setting for human activity. The type of transformation we are witnessing in Fresh Kills is not a new phenomenon, but rather it is embedded in the tradition of New York City parks. Transforming the identity of space through the insertion of nature began in the 19th century with the incorporation of Central Park.

Throughout New York's park history, the constructed representations of nature have operated as a reflection of the social context. Central Park is one of the first examples of the manifestation of the representative notions of the cultural context in New York City park space. Fredrick Law Olmstead and Calvin Vaux designed a "park for the people," by using the contemporary English pastoral aesthetic. The idea of the scenic landscape, as seen in Central Park have long been held as the standard of

beauty, filled with rocky peaks, bluffs, flowing water and gnarled trees which together construct an idyllic form based on the cultural ideal of how nature looks. This is where we first see scenic landscapes used as camouflage to create a distraction from the actions that influence greater ecological damages. Joan Nassauer argues that the scenic aesthetic was fundamentally flawed by the premise that human presence should be hidden. The pastoral landscape distracted society from asking how humans affected nature (Nassauer 1997,75). This idea of constructing an idyllic nature to camouflage damaged ecological health has been a trend throughout New York City's history.

More recently, an abandoned railroad was repurposed into a linear park called the High Line. The High Line frames views which highlight urban scenes instead of offering pastoral images similar to Central Park. Rather than framing specific views, Fresh Kills focuses on human interaction with nature through recreational activities and educational programs in an attempt to reconnect the severed relationship between human and nature. Fresh Kills provides an example for the next chapter in the changing urban aesthetic of New York City.

Anne Spirn (1998, 108) notes, "The City is both natural and contrived, a transformation of 'wild' nature to serve human needs, an evolving entity shaped by both natural and cultural processes." It is both the contrived and natural occurrences within the urban environment that drives it's progression. The urban form- including both the built and lived environment is dynamic and continuously evolveing through a series of statements and responses. These urban transitions are directly reflected in the built

green spaces through objectives, aesthetics and programs, as these spaces are products of the city. With this being said, I am interested in the idea of how nature is a reflection of the cultural processes.

The idea of nature is incredibly difficult to define and articulate, rather it seems to be an experience. The experience of nature is impossible to separate from humans. As nature and humans have been intrinsically connected through their spatial and biologic relationship from the beginning of human existence. For the purpose of clarity, when talking about nature throughout this paper, I will discuss this notion in terms of socio-nature.

Erik Swyngedouw describes socio-nature as “part natural and part social and that embodies a multiplicity of historical-geographical relations and processes." In our modern world it is impossible to separate ecological conditions and processes, as they should not operate separately. Existing socio-natural conditions are a result of the intricate transformation of pre-existing relationships that are themselves natural and social (Swyngedouw 1991, 445). The dialectic relationship of nature and society is mediated by material, ideological and representation practices, which are all present in the site of Fresh Kills.

David Harvey (1996, 150) further explains the mediation of the relationship between nature and society. Nature and the environment have the ability to not only serve as a cultural pleasantry but also produce a source of value in the capitalistic society. He begins with the idea that the view of nature as a “resource” was a product of

the bourgeois political economy of the eighteenth century. This idea of nature as a supply, both as raw material and property, assumed the allocation of scarce resources and in turn suggested that money was the common means to measure the heterogeneities of human desires, values, elements of and processes in nature (Harvey 1996, 150). Harvey suggests that money not only is the measure of human desire, but also serves as the language that the holders of social power appreciate and understand (Harvey 1996, 150). This suggests those with money and in turn social power are able to impose specific definitions upon nature.

In this case of Fresh Kills, those with social power, the New York Park Department has the ability to dictate the aesthetics and conceptualization of nature in Fresh Kills. Greider and Garkovich discuss the role of social power in the representation and identity formation of nature. They argue that landscapes are a symbolic environment created by humans as a way to confer meaning upon nature, producing an "environmental definition" through a particular filter of values and beliefs. These landscapes reflect our own cultural definitions of ourselves (Garovich and Greider 1994, 1). By constructing these representations through symbols and conceptions, we are organizing people's relationships in the social world through the creation of a new identity of nature.

In order to assess the reconstructed identity of Fresh Kills, we must begin by exploring the present state of the identity of this space. In Linda Pollack's essay "Matrix Landscape: Construction of Identity in the Large Park," she expands upon the

complexity embedded within Fresh Kills. She argues that Fresh Kill's identity is not isolated to its use as a landfill but it has a separate identity in its urban position and also as a wetlands ecosystem. It was this acknowledgement of the multiplicity of identities that helped Field Operations win the competition. They successfully devised a plan to incorporate distinctive aspects of Fresh Kills and its historical use as a landfill, wetlands ecology and its future as a park and ecological preserve. The many uses of the space acknowledge and enable difference and layers to coexist within one single identity of Fresh Kills. This integration of the multiplicity of social and natural concerns is a way of affirming Fresh Kills heterogeneity (Pollack 2007, 87).

The ideological motive behind Fresh Kills is an attempt to bring the space back to life through aesthetic rehabilitation. This idea of renewal is tied to the American tradition of using nature as a symbol of healing (Pollack 93). Although the idea that Fresh Kills could be returned to nature perpetuates the myth that nature is separate from people, culture and history. In Central Park, the allure of the pastoral landscape camouflages the undesirable "unnatural conditions" such as the 19th century Manhattan squatters, or the graffitied skeleton of the High Line railroad or in the instance of Fresh Kills, a half centuries worth of debris, decay and waste. The covering of a messy interior is another example of American historical amnesia; the belief that it is possible to wipe the slate clear and move forward.

The green spaces within New York City stand as a testament to the enduring place of nature in urban design. In the case of Fresh Kills, land that was once served

as the dump for all of New York will soon become an iconic space within the city limits. A ferry service will transport people from New York City and New Jersey to the heart of the park that will serve as a connection between the larger community to the cultural, recreational and educational activities. Some of the activities integrated into the design include hiking trails, horseback riding trails, basketball and handball courts, turf fields, bike paths and an observatory deck. Fresh Kills is the first park within New York to be created not only as a destination, but a place of activity that goes beyond walking and observing as it provides a multitude of amenities that cater to educational, athletic and cultural experiences (Field Operations 2002, 20). Fresh Kills is an example of how humans, specifically New Yorkers, imagine their future: transform the scars we have left on the planet through the use of nature into productive space.

The transformation of this space cannot only occur on a superficial level, but also must engage the biological and ecological processes of Fresh Kills. The Society of Ecological Restoration defines restoration as "the process intentionally altering a site to establish a defined indigenous, historical ecosystem. The goal of this process is to emulate the structure, function, diversity and dynamic of the specific ecosystem." Through Anne Riley's (1998, 149) analysis, it becomes clear that restoration is intrinsically tied to human presence. The idea of restoration is only implemented when land has endured human abuse. Thus in the space of Fresh Kills, the aesthetic rehabilitation is inherently attached to ecological restoration.

The aesthetic and ecological restoration of Fresh Kills is projected to take the

next 30 years, a time when the ideas of nature will change and evolve. As the idea of nature evolves and the park matures, Fresh Kills will never rid its identity as a landfill. As time progresses, a half-century worth of New York City waste is continually broken down by the methane-producing bacteria. This biological process occurring underneath the layer of dirt is mimicked on the exterior not only in maturation of the park but also in the evolving notion of nature.

To further understand the reconstruction of nature within Fresh Kills I examined the site both in its present state and through the images constructed by the competing architecture firms. Fresh Kills Park is a particularly interesting topic because it exists only as a series of drawings and reports that present the space in an idyllic form. One is only capable of viewing Fresh Kills, both as an urban structure and a construction of nature through the illustrations, diagrams and writing presented by the landscape architects and planners. In order to understand the process of this construction of nature I analysis the six finalist's submissions which were published in the fourth issue of *Praxis,* a journal of writing and building. Through these presentations I was able to explore how each team represented nature through aesthetics, activities, cultural sites and the improvement to the ecological environment. This exploration will helped me to understand the re-conceptualization of nature as a marketable idea, which was then presented to the NYC Parks department. The relationship between the vision of the client and the product of the architects reveals New York City's notions of nature as a reconstruction, which acts as a reflection of our ideals within society.

Through my exploration of texts written on Fresh Kills, I have found a lack of literature that connects this space to the production of socio-nature and the tradition of ecological atonement within New York City. Linda Pollack along with other authors connect Fresh Kills with other large-scale parks, but fail to look at the trajectory of New York City park design as a means of ecological atonement. Through this trajectory I explore the reconstructed notion of nature within Fresh Kills and the contextual factors that have influenced this re-conceptualization. I also focus on the shift in New York City's parks from spectacle to ecological atonement.

I conduct my discussion through the ascent of the archeological layers that compose Fresh Kills. I begin in the layer composed of trash, which decays beneath the constructed surface, here I will discuss the history of abused spaces in New York City brought back to life through nature as a symbol of healing. In this chapter I will discuss the origins of Fresh Kills in the context of the history of undesirable spaces in New York and their transformations into public spaces. I then ascend to the layer of lining that contains the debris as a representation of the identity of this space as both a landfill beneath this plastic lining and a beautified space on the opposing side. Here, I discuss how six finalists for the Fresh Kills Competition dealt with the layered identity of wetlands, landfill and landscape to create a construction of nature that would connect Fresh Kills into the urban fabric and park culture of New York City. I then breach the soil to examine the socio and political climate in which these developments are operating

within. I examine the idea of identity within the context of a global city and the branding techniques that have become intrinsic with the development of New York City.

In chapter 2, I illuminate on the history of ecological atonement through park design in New York City. I focus on Central Park and the High Line that were deemed undesirable spaces and "healed" through the implementation of landscape design. I begin this discussion with why and how these places were deemed undesirable and why these places were zoned for park use. After I discuss the context of the rezoning I explore nature as a symbol of healing.

The healing of this space, not only must be applied to the physical aspects of ecosystems but the way in which we perceive this space. In Chapter 3, I explore the multi-layered and dynamic identity that surrounds and defines Fresh Kills as it transforms from the trashcan of New York into a constructed tourist destination. I look at this transformation through the lens of the design submissions of the six finalists in the competition for the re-design of Fresh Kills. I focus on their depiction of Fresh Kills through graphics and writing to highlight their own conceptions of nature and their plans to re-incorporation Fresh Kills into the larger urban fabric of New York City.

The re-incorporation of Fresh Kills back into New York cannot be successful simply through the manipulation of the landscaped aesthetic, but the notion of the space's identity must be taken into account. In chapter four, I examine the transition of Fresh Kills identity as a dismal space of trash and waste to becoming a center of tourism and leisure.

In my concluding chapter, I discuss Field Operations' reconstruction of Fresh Kills as a symbol of ecological atonement. I explain how the creation of this park relates to long history of park spaces created within New York City. I discuss how the Field Operations presents a symbolic environment as ecological atonement ultimately as a reflection of our own cultural definitions of ourselves though the implementation of Anne Spirn's idea of the "new urban aesthetic." This reflection of our ideals seen in the designs and the incorporation of recreational opportunities, ecological restoration, cultural and educational programs is an attempt to renew public concern for the human impact on earth. This act of ecological atonement is not only an attempt to restore the aesthetic quality of this space, but an attempt to create a productive urban park culture which fosters a new and different relationship between humans and nature.

CHAPTER TWO:

A History of New York City's Atoned Spaces

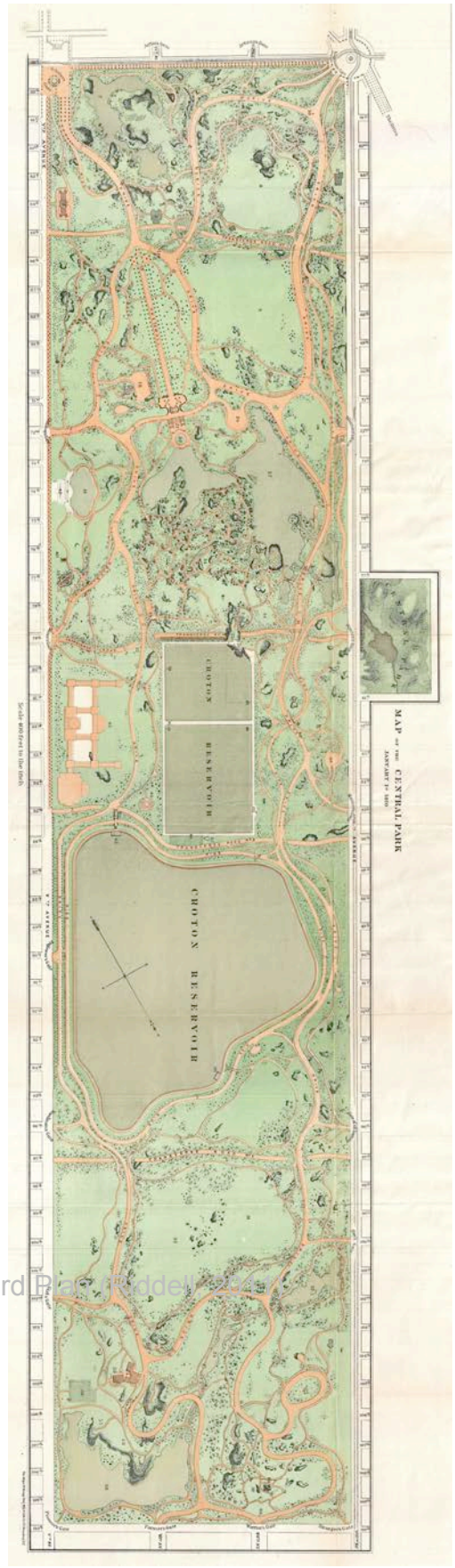
Two centuries ago, parks were created out of former gardens. One century ago parks were built on rural parcels on the fringes of expanding cities. Today we build urban parks on the only land that is available in metropolitans- in most cases the land that is available is abandoned, obsolete or polluted lands (Meyer 2007, 59). This chapter examines New York City's history of urban parks built in or atop these spaces deemed undesirable. I begin by examining Central Park and its evolution from a squatter's sanctuary to the iconic form in which in stands today. I then look at the story of the High Line, the transformation of a repurposed railroad into a unique urban space. Finally, I discuss Fresh Kills, New York City's latest attempt to redevelopment and restore the natural beauty and ecology of atop the world's largest landfill.

Through these case studies I discuss the history of New York City's utilization of nature as a healing symbol in an attempt to atone for social, industrial and ecological failures. We see this first example in the pastoral design of Central Park, where the pastoral landscape camouflages the unnatural conditions where the rolling fields and scenic promenades have been placed over a land once ridden with shanties and filth. The power to bring abused land back to life is entwined with a need for redemption, where the park acts as a symbol of healing (Pollack 2007, 87). The idea of renewal of a space is tied to a tradition of using landscape to re-naturalize a space that bears scars of exploitation.

A Park For the People

Central Park was the first example of a park not only used as a symbol of redemption but a space for all citizens in New York City. The introduction of Central Park into New York City created a “public” space in a capitalistic city that was every citizen’s to use. Historically spaces defined as a territory open to all people suggest an ideal type of village, a common property had served in small, homogenous communities. With the advent of Central Park, it presented a remarkable challenge to open a territory to all people in a capitalistic and socially divided city, particularly because of the means that were taken in order to built Central Park in the mid-nineteenth century (Blackmar and Rosenweig 1992, 6).

The conceptual foundation of Central Park began in 1811 when city officials first developed a master plan for the streets of Manhattan, prior to this development the city had grown organically. The majority of people lived on the southern tip of the island and as the city



Greensward Plan, Olmsted, 2021

developed, streets in the most densely populated areas became jumbled and disorderly and consequently traversed the city is all directions. The grid plan proposed a design that would create orderly, straight lines. Avenues would run north to south, while streets ran east to west. The plan generated a major public works project that aimed to transform Manhattan into a modern city as it reflected intended growth and development (Page 1995, 188). But the plan had one major flaw, in the proposed grid plan there was a complete lack of park space.

As the expansion of the commercial and industrial activity continued to develop in lower Manhattan, the construction consequently wiped out all the natural spaces on the island. As the urban growth began to push out of lower Manhattan and into Midtown, city officials were forced to react to the impending death of all that was green in New York City. As a result of the lack if green space planned in the grid system, Central Park was proposed as an effort to preserve nature within context where the natural environment which was being plowed down by the commercial and industrial expansion. The insertion of green space in the context of rapid social and urban development was seen as a gauge for the city's moral, economic and physical well-being - a patch of serenity in a sea of development. This construction nature was an act of atonement as city officials attempted to compensate for the destruction of native species and green space.

Of course, there were other motives to build a pastoral space in the center of the hustle and bustle of nineteenth century Manhattan. The creation of Central Park would

increase land value of its surrounding areas and draw development uptown where the city leaders envisioned growth with the implementation of the grid. Matthew Gandy (2002, 85) writes, “The Park’s creation altered the relationship between municipal government and private capital under the guise of a newly defined ‘public interest,’ within which the prospects for real estate speculation were greatly enhanced.” The central location of the park would benefit many uptown landowners, but at the cost of many citizens who were living in the space of the proposed park.

The space where the city proposed a park was home to citizens who had created communities outside the densely packed lower Manhattan. In the mid-nineteenth century, uptown Manhattan was merely a suburb as it was situated outside the densest urban concentration. A New York Times reporter described the some 5,000 occupants-both landowning and squatting as a picture of “human misery in its lowest filthiest depths” living in the space where Central Park would soon be constructed (Blackmar and Rosenweigz 1992, 61). One of the neighborhoods that occupied this space was Seneca Village, which had a high number of land-owning African Americans and had its own churches and schools. Another neighborhood called Yorktown was home to a large Irish population where they used the land to grow vegetables and keep animals. The residents were typically unskilled workers or held service jobs such as laborers, gardeners and domestics (Blackmar and Rosenweig 1992, 64). People lived in rickety, one stories shanties, which were each inhabited by four or five persons not including the goats and the pigs. The reported went on to describe the park as a “scene of plunder

and depredation, the headquarters of vagabonds and scoundrels of every description" (Blackmar and Rosenweig 1992, 63). The large community of squatters took to this land largely because it was marginalized real estate. Large rock ridges bisect Manhattan Island; it presented a difficult environment to develop large coherent projects, as well as presented an unappealing place to live (Jindrich 200, 678).

The area intended for Central Park was not city-owned, but rather privately owned. Some of the inhabitants of the shantytowns own their own parcels, while others obtained permission of the owners of the land before erecting their shanties (Blacksmar and Rosenweig 1992, 77). Prior to the construction of the park, city officials first had to obtain the land from private owners. Senator James Beekman proclaimed, "a park is not sufficient public necessity to justify its being taken by the state in opposition to the wish of the owners by the violent exercise of immanent domain…cemeteries are never are taken by this method - always by voluntary sale" (Blackmar and Rosenweig 1992 59). Ultimately, the land for Central Park was taken through a judicial procedure that forced its inhabitants off the land and providing them with insufficient compensation.

The construction of Central Park would not be the first instance of slum clearance in New York City. In nineteenth century New York there was dialectic between creation and destruction that took place in an effort to reform housing conditions amongst New York's poor. There were two opposite impulses that motivated different schools of housing reformers. The first was to provide better conditions for the worst-off citizens by improve the physically environment and providing social services. The second

impulse was to destroy the “unhealthy” parts of the city. Max Page in his book *The Creative Destruction of New York* suggests that the slum clearance in New York City was similar to a surgeon eliminating a diseased part of the body in the interest of protecting the whole. However is the second school of thought that manifests itself more clearly in the case of New York City. Although the clearance of some 1,600 residents was clothed in democratic rhetoric, the decision to wipe the “unhealthy” park of the space clean was an attempt to beautify an “undesirable” space with the symbol of healing that ultimately benefited real estate.

In the slum clearance of Central Park, another instance of atonement becomes apparent. Seneca Village along with the other organically occurring settlements that once stood in the space of Central Park were deemed undesirable. Not only because of the physical barriers of rock, but because of the disorderly, low-class establishments that had emerged. These communities not only posed a visual disturbance, but also a financial hindrance on the expansion of the real estate market in upper Manhattan. City officials deemed this place undesirable, and the space of visual, social and financial burden which needed to be healed by nature. By ridding the space of its “social filth,” the city could atone for its own neglect of the immigrant population that caused these shanties town by erasing the evidence through nature. Although a community was destroyed, it was destroyed to make room for a public space in a capitalistic city that was previously segregated by class and race. This shows there was not only physical

atonement but also social atonement in this act of slum clearance. As villages were destroyed and a bucolic, communal setting was constructed, one space for immigrant and black populations closed and another opened.

The High Line in 1930
(The High Line, 2013)

Atonement Atop The High Line

As New York City moved into the nineteenth century, industry was booming. Freight trains were rapidly moving goods in and out of Manhattan's most industrial district on the lower west side. The High Line, built in 1930 was a massive public-private project that lifted the existing freight trains 30 feet into the air and removed the rapid and often dangerous trains from the pedestrian level. The train ran directly through buildings and warehouses conveniently supplying a means of transportation through 1980 (The High Line History, 2013).

Since 1980, the High Line has stood in its original form as a characteristic piece of abandoned industrial infrastructure, like many examples of urban skeletons

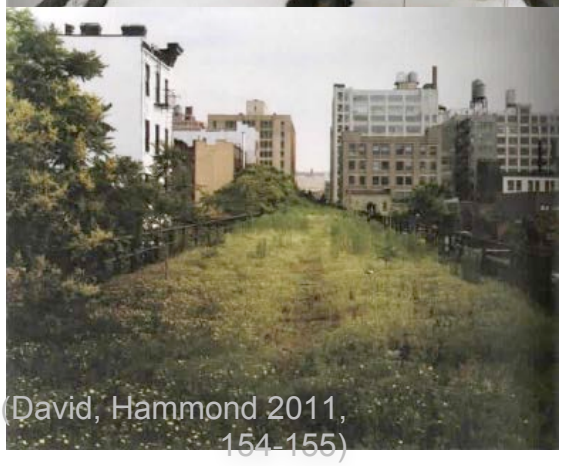
that have come to litter the American landscape. Pieces such as the High Line, remind us of our industrial past while simultaneously make us wonder what we should do with this massive railroad that has hovered above New York's lower west side for more than 70 years.

There were numerous companies and property owners who wanted the structure gone has it was urban decay that no longer proved a service to the city of New York and they felt that could develop the space into more profitable enterprises. Conrail, the railroad company that owned the High line, along with a consortium of local property owners, led by one of the areas largest interest, Edison Parking, wanted the High Line gone. Even the city wanted the structure gone, but the issue remained that no one was willing to pay to take it down. As a result, the High Line languished while the legal battles over the structure fate smoldered.

There were also advocates for the preservation of the High Line. Peter Obletz, a Chelsea resident, activist and railroad enthusiast challenged Conrail and the other business orders in an attempt to preserve the historic sight. In 1999, the Friends of the High Line, a group founded by Joshua David and Robert Hammond, both residents of the neighborhood began to fundraise and advocate for the High Line's preservation and reuse.

Joshua and Robert's interest in the High Line was sparked when they began exploring the role the structure played in the city. It was not disconnected litter then hung in the sky but rather a continuous relic that

spanned a 22-block stretch from Gansevoort Street to 34th St - a unique industrial antique stuck in the aesthetic moment of industrialization. The rusting Art Deco railings



(David, Hammond 2011, 154-155)

gave the structure a lost sense of beauty and the spaces underneath had a dramatic, dark, lofty and almost church-like quality. After asking some inhabitants of the West side, Josh learned that the High Line was not abandoned, but rather a space for couples, raves and a few homeless encampments. In 1999, Joshua and Robert met at a community meeting about the High line where they both expressed interest in saving the industrial artifact. Finally in 2002, after huge donations from supporters, Friends of High Line gained support from the City Council for the reuse and re-purposing of the High Line.

After years of lawsuits centering on the fate of the High Line, the Friends of High Line finally had won - the High Line would remain standing as a testament to New York's past. The next step was developing the structure into a useable space. Joshua and Robert first

held an idea competition since the foundation had no money and no right to implement these ideas the competition was held as a starting point that encouraged people to see this abandoned space in new ways (David and Hammond 53). Finally, after a the rezoning of West Chelsea had been alter to cater to the High Line, the re-conceptualization of the High Line could begin.

The Friends of the High Line received 51 competition designs including submissions from Steven Holl and Zaha Hadid but ultimately, Diller Scofidio + Renfo and Field Operations (the same landscape architecture firm that had won the Fresh Kills competition) were selected. The design of Diller Scofidio + Renfo and Field Operations appealed to the Friends of the High Line because they appreciated the natural landscape of wild flowers and native grasses forged a life on this industrial relic (David and Hammond 2011, 75). In a way, nature had already inserted itself as the healer of this abandoned space.

It was in 2006 when this construction first began on the forgotten structure in an attempt to revive a forgotten railroad. The designs maintained the character of the High Line itself; the design reflected the linearity and the straightforward pragmatism of the original railroad. Even the emergence of wild plant life- meadows, thickets, vines mosses flowers mixed with the steel tracks, railings and concrete reappeared in the final design. The final design incorporated a variety of public spaces and biotopes along the linear stretch up the west side.

The High Line is essentially a green roof atop an elevated railroad tack. The layers that compose the “living roof” include a porous drainage layer, gravel, filter fabric, sub soil and topsoil. The materials used to construct this project were selected for their longevity, which reduce waste that is usually caused by later replacement. The “water interaction zone” is a closed system, which means that water is re-circulated. In addition to the recycling of water used on the High Line, rainwater is harvested from the roofs of nearby buildings. In the case where water cannot be harvested naturally, drought resistant plant species have been used to fit the High Line’s micro-climate (The High Line, 2013).

It is through this preservation of material that we see the social reflection that is entwined with the design of the High Line. The design used a structure, which was regarded as “waste” to create a large scale reuse and recycling project. The High Line is a monument to human’s ability to reflect upon our past, to see our failures and to somehow correct them, or

(David,

attempt to atone for them. The placement of the park is an atonement that operates in two very different ways. For one, it is a reflection on the industrial revolution that sparks the immense consumption that drove us to the mindset of “lets just tear it down.” Secondly, it acts as atonement for the period that was ushered in by the industrial revolution where American’s levels of consumption and production of waste went unchecked. The High Line is a monument to the human or perhaps New York’s ability to critically reflect and realize that we do not need to re-produce material to be consumed, but simply look at the production already in existence and react.

From Landfill to Landscape

Prior to the redevelopment of the High Line, a significant New York City project was already underway- the transformation of the largest landfill in American to New York’s second largest park. Fresh Kills is just the most recent example of an undesirable space reused and re-conceptualization through the construction of nature. The challenge in the design and construction of Fresh Kills is the creation of an aesthetic experience that engages the invisible relationship of the everyday life. Field Operation, the designers of Fresh Kills Park, had to consider the connection of our consumer culture has Fresh Kills landfill is an ecological tragedy that is a result of our actions.

The design of Fresh Kills employs techniques that exploit the temporal qualities of the landscape as a dynamic, performative and an open-ended medium that is capable of changing with the inevitable physical changes of the landfill over time. The

engagement with the temporal aspect of this atonement is essential because of human's former inability to conceptualize the temporal dimension of the landfill's impact on the environment. Industrial time - that is the time of calendars, clocks and machines has dominated our presentation of nature for centuries and as a result is considered a separate from the dynamic processes of nature (Meyer 2007, 80).

Before we can explore how the Fresh Kills design incorporates its buried past we must first look at the path to becoming the world's largest landfill. Prior to Fresh Kills identity as a landfill it was a wetlands, an ecological space that was stigmatized for being dangerous and disease ridden. Historically, wetlands in many urban environments were used as dumps because they were thought of as no better than dumps, naturally Fresh Kills, a public space located in on the outer edge of Staten Island evolved into a dumping ground. Landscape historian Elizabeth Barstow points out that "'Landfill' when preceded by 'sanitary' is a euphemism for 'garbage dump' and Fresh Kills become an official landfill. Moses envisioned the garbage as a foundation to be used under the approach system for the Verrazono-Narrows Bridge that would connect Staten Island and Brooklyn. In addition to serving as a convenient component to the bridge support system, Staten Island was a largely rural and politically powerless borough in 1948. It was connected to Manhattan, the financial and cultural center of New York only by a ferry line. Fresh Kills' proximity to the city, its visual distance from the urban center and its organic development as a dump created an opportunity for Moses to officially rezone the wetlands as a landfill (Specter 1991).

Fresh Kills continued to grow as one large sanitation accident. The landfill was originally only supposed to be in operation for 5 years but resulted in a 53-year chain

reaction that became a 3,000-acre behemoth of trash without anyone ever really attending to it. As New York continued to develop and grow, environmental rules tightened and the landfills of New York began to close. By the mid-1980's Fresh Kills was the city's only option, and the only thing that kept it open was pure inertia- the mass of garbage that arrived daily was too monumental to conceivably stop.

The Verrazono-Narrows Bridge was constructed in the 1960's and eventually led to the doubling of Staten Island's population and ushered in a new generation of politicians including Guy V. Molinari, who became the borough president in the 1981. Molinari's vision for the future of Staten Island included the closing of Fresh Kills, thus it became his political quest to end the age of trash in Staten Island. He enlisted high-powered friends like future Mayor Rudy Giulani in his fight against Fresh Kills; Giuliani forged an agreement in 1996 that Fresh Kills would be closed. With the closure of Fresh Kills, the 3000-acres had to be repurposed, the space not only stood as a reminder of ecological abuse but it provided an opportunity for financial and cultural gain. Since landfills take decades to adjust and settle, commercial and residential development were unfit for the space upon Fresh Kills, an appropriate program would have to be more flexible, like a park. After 53-years of dumping the waste of New York onto Staten Island, the people of Staten Island deserved a space of pleasure, a space that could redeem the sins of the environmental hazard that had grown to define their island, this act of redemption would manifest itself in Fresh Kills Park.

The beginning of the "naturalization" of Fresh Kills began in the 90's with a landscape architect named Bill Young, who was hired to help transform the heaps

of trash back to a more natural topographic state. His vision was to create a 19th century pine community similar to the original prairie of Staten Island. He began to reintroduce nature on top Fresh Kills through a constructed terrain - he instructed the bulldozer operators to contours the trash heaps with curves and bumps to create artificial topography. In addition to the undulating curves and bumps of the landfill, Young began to "heal" the land by throwing seeds atop the thin layer of soil in hopes that grass would soon cover the reality of trash that would forever rest just a beneath a thin layer of plastic (Spector 1991).

Young was not the first to envision the space of Fresh Kills as parkland. During the 70's, American artists had begun to engage themselves with ecological art to cope with the polluted waters and land that had been generated by American consumerism. The most significant of these artists was Mierle Laderman Ukeles who brought attention to the routine and failing maintenance of our cities in the 1960's. In 1969, she created a *Manifesto for Maintenance Art*, which laid the philosophical foundation for her earliest works, one of which included a documentation of the New York City Sanitation system and facilities and a proposal to turn six New York City's dumps into urban earth sites. Her objective was to save these disturbed sites from obscurity.

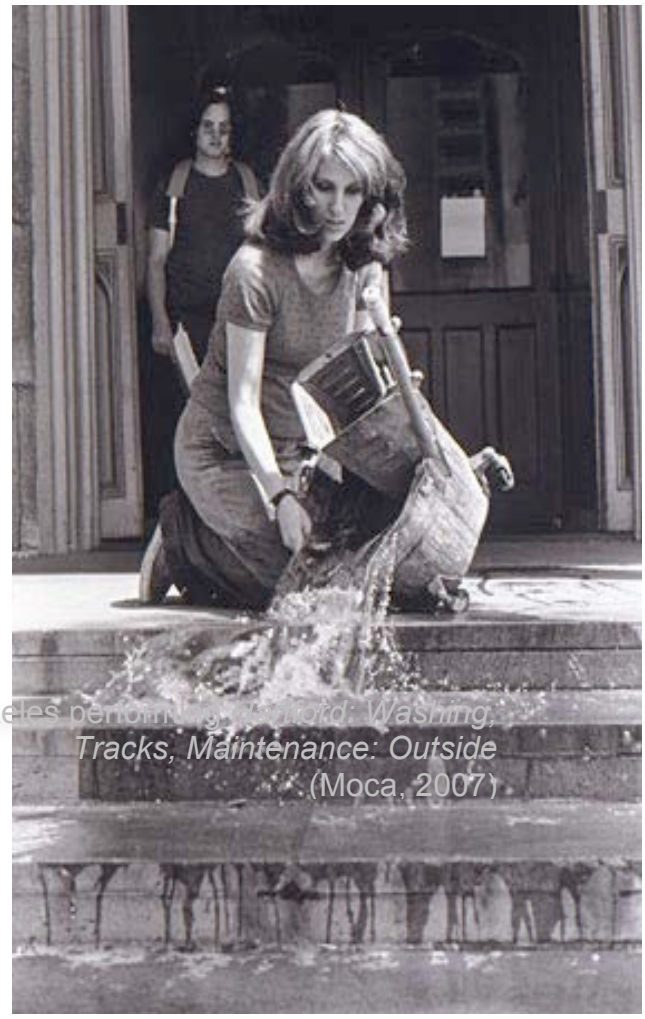
She claimed these spaces were abstract symbols of the city's authority; she recognized them as a conflict between public practice and private needs. Ukeles described Fresh Kills as "a rich, awesome zone, highly charged and vibrating, awaiting the entry of art," as she believed that art serves as an articulator, a mediator and most importantly a healer and a creator of a new reality (Engler 2004, 96). Ukeles believed that before art could usher in a new reality for these

disturbed place, its path to disturbance would have to be understood.

In 1994, Ukeles created a video and audio installation in New York's Queens Museum to represent the latest methods and technologies used to map, measure, plan and monitor Fresh Kills (Engler 2004, 99). She used this installation as a method for the masses to access and enter this daunting space, ultimately bringing the consumer into a closer relationship with the land, which they were tarnishing. It portrayed the space as factual and practical, as well as human and poetic through images, documents, maps, images of microbes digesting the waste inside the landfill and a list of the functions that people performed at this landfill. The audio component was primarily recording of more than forty birds species that are attracted to the site and its marshes.

Ukeles called Fresh Kills "the city's most comprehensive, democratic social structure." She saw it as a place to begin dialogue about the waste system and facilities that are defining and reflecting our relations to the material world. The notion of

Fresh



Ukeles performing *Touch Sanitation: Washing, Tracks, Maintenance: Outside* (Moca, 2007)

Fresh Kills as a “social structure” is fitting in that it encompasses a piece of every New Yorker’s life from the later half of the 20th. The waste of New York sits in Staten Island as a testament to American consumerism and development but also as a space that can be transformed to fit the future.

Not all New Yorkers saw the beauty in Fresh Kills that Ukeles saw, many particularly those living around Staten Island saw is as a disturbed place, a hindrance on development and a smelly wasteland that needed to be dealt with. Staten Island official’s burdens with the society’s ecological disrepair and agony over the lost paradise proposed a plan to return the landfill back to landscape.

In 2001, the New York City Department of City Planning held an international design completion following the Request for Proposal to find a landscape architecture firm to design the park that would not only sit atop the landfill but also

Brownfields atop Fresh Kills (Landviews, 2013)

Master Plan (Field Operations, 2002,22)

Fresh Kills 2030 (Field Operations, 2002,22)

engage its identity within the city. The first round of the competition was open to all participants, until August of 2001 when the competition narrowed to six finalists: Field Operations, Hargreaves Associates, Mathur/da Cunha, Tom Leader Studio, and John McAslan + Partners, RIOS Associates, Inc., and Sasaki Associates, Inc.

Ultimately, Field Operations, the same firm who a year later would design the Highline, won the competition. James Corner, a landscape architect and principal at Field Operations proposed a nature reserve that would restore the once unique biological community of the space and also create opportunities for cultural experience. To create a more diverse, integrated ecosystem and include opportunities for a cultural experience, the Field Operations team had constructed a plan they referred to as Lifescape.

Field Operations defines their programmatic approach through “Lifescape,” a design strategy that recognizes “humanity as symbolically evolving, globally interconnected and technologically advanced system.” Lifescape also works to include ecological reflection, passive recreation, active sports, community development, cultural events while also implementing ideals of nature. It was Field Operation’s goal to transform the wasteland of Fresh Kills into a space of open programs and natural reserves (Field Operations, 2013). The design objective of Lifescape not only aims to disguise a damaged space but transform Fresh Kills into a space where park-goers can engage with nature despite its constructed reality.

In the spaces of Fresh Kills, Central Park and the High Line, the park-goer is incapable of completely overcoming the oppositions between nature and culture. As a result of this intrinsic connection between nature and culture these damaged and

marginalized spaces are seen as nuisances that need to be “fixed. ” These dead, barren, ugly and polluted sites must then be “reborn” as living places, useful for society (Engle 2004, 82). Embedded within these attempt to camouflage the social, industrial and ugly consumerism that lays beneath the façade of beauty are landscape typologies encoded with ideals of nature.

The resurrection of these spaces into pastoral parks, linear walkways or recreational centers transforms the “other” and unnatural into the familiar and natural. It some ways these approaches re-essentialize the binary conceptions we have between humans and nature and erases the need to critically looks at our landscapes and habits. This is particularly true in the example of the Field Operation’s Lifescape approach. Field Operations descriptions of humans in the “LifeScape” plan alienates and distances the user from nature. They describe the park-goer as an impermanent component to the overall program, an element that is distance divorces from the oppositional element of nature. Perhaps this is because the space of Fresh Kills has never been a space for humans, but rather a space constructed by them. it is this construction and in turn, re-conceptualization that is the most important element of Field Operations design within the context of this project. By using landscape techniques that transform not only the land itself but the identity of the Fresh Kills, the space is no longer disregard, avoided or shameful - in the context of our society this act of atonement renders our own ecological sins as forgivable.

CHAPTER THREE

The Competition: Re-conceptualizing Nature Upon a Space of Trash

The site of Fresh Kills is toxic; it is filled with smells, rats, leachate and off gassing. The dismal disorder that is an accumulation of New York City's waste rests and degrades under just a thin layer of plastic and soil. America's willingness to cover a space damaged by humans is yet another example of the American tradition of "wiping the slate clean." As we construct and design a narrative that attempts to atone for our ecological failings, we must also reckon with the reality of the interior of Fresh Kills. Traditionally, the identity shift from landfill to landscape is another example of the fiction of the untouched nature, a lived myth that the external land can return to the unspoiled environment. However the landfill is not an inert mass, it is a living, breathing and potentially frighten organism that demands respect and care.

In 2001, the City of New York presented a competition for the transformation of Fresh Kills landfill into a beautified landscape. Initially there were over 200 proposals from teams all over the world for the master planning position (NYC Parks 2013). That same year, the New York City Department of planning chose six finalists: Field Operations, Hargreave Associates, Marthur/da Cunha, Tom Leader Studio, John McAslan + Parters, RIOS Associates and Sasaki Associates, Inc. Each design team consisted of a landscape and architectural design firm, a planning and programmatic development team, technical expertise and execution team, research, education and conceptual framework team, ecological consultant and an artist consultant.

In nearly every proposal the designers introduced Fresh Kills as a space with multiple identities. Some proposals highlighted the ecological identity of Fresh Kills contrasted with its identity as a space of complex environmental concerns. Others focused on the social identity and its transformation as a space of hazard to that of tourism and relaxation.

In addition to transforming Fresh Kills from a landfill to a landscape the designers had to accommodate the landfill's inevitable physical evolution, which are a result of physical and biologic processes. Since Fresh Kills has only recently been closed, the material within its layer of protective film continues to degrade, transform and settle. Thus, the landscape atop Fresh Kills cannot be treated as a static painting of a landscape but must be framed to incorporate the changing scenery along with the evolution of the social, economical and political agents that all are active in this transformative process.

This chapter focuses on how these teams conceived the relationship between a constructed nature a top a space of trash in the context of urbanization. Architects and designers were forced to reflect on their role as the builders of the city and transform into rehabilitators for the urban. Through this project, New York City politicians, residents and designers were forced to recognize that landscape has the ability to evolve, not only through the maturation of the biotic components but also accept that the social identity would need to shift in order to make Fresh Kills a successful project. The synthesis of these two ideas requires a process that incorporates the past, present

and future while simultaneously producing a new model for with the process of urbanization.

Through the analysis of the submission presented in issue the fourth of *Praxis Magazine* which was published in 2002, I critically analysis each finalist's representation and construction of nature in Fresh Kills Park. Each submission includes diagrams, writing and illustrations, which fuse to create not only a re-conceptualization of nature, but also brand for Fresh Kills and the larger New York City Parks department.

[PARKLANDS] by **HARGREAVES ASSOCIATES**

Hargreaves Associates, an international company with offices in both the US and UK approached the transformation of Fresh Kills by first identifying their major obstacle: scale. This design team emphasized the importance of how large landscapes are "living, dynamic entities set in motion by initial designs and forever evolving in relation to human activity and biological development" (Praxis 2002, 29). In response to the vastness of this space, the team approached this design problem in a series of programmatic implementations.

Hargreaves Associates employed a design strategy with three distinct parts; they first would implement "succession" then "operation" and finally "transformation." Each of these design stages would occur in different places at varying times which would help to propel the project forward while simultaneously conceptualizing management for centuries to come.

The succession phase focused on the ecology of the site as they planned to add soil a top the landfill until volunteer flora and fauna inhabited and began to enrich the site. In addition to adding soil for the reemergence of native species, Hargreaves proposed a wooded area that would reconnect de-fragment the existing peripheral woods with the space of Fresh Kills.

The operation component focused on the technical construction of the topography and its integration into the urban infrastructure. The Hargreaves proposal would interrupt the current process of closing the landfill as they planned to change the topography of the trash heaps. They proposed flat, multipurpose lawn platforms at the top of each trash mound rather than the undulating trash heaps which created an illusion of rolling hills. This topographic transformation would create recreational programs to suit the cultural objectives of the project. The final stage of transformation would work to alter the social and cultural identity of Fresh Kills, the team proposed surface metamorphoses in specific areas: the reestablishment of lake island, creation of a readily

Program and surface diagrams (Praxis 2002, 29)

accessible flat area for programmed center and a stabilized landfill for a reflective World Trade Center memorial.

Hargreaves and Associates' design proposal may be interpreted as simple, as they aimed to let the current conditions of the landfill combined with the site, shape, topography to interact and create a successful landscape that allows for the spontaneous development of culture while simultaneously enhancing regional biodiversity.

Hargreaves Associates uses a narrative tool in their submission to attract and communicate to the viewer, which in the context of this proposal was the New York City Parks Department. Their narrative, constructed through an illustrated comic book, helps the viewer understand the scale, as a 2,200-acre space is conceptually difficult to grasp through writing and abstracted diagrams. The park user, as seen in the comic strip, experiences the park by car, then travels to the centerpiece of structural design which is called The Domain. The Domain is comprised of large expanses of lawn that surround an observation bridge that overlooks one of the creeks flowing into the park.

The focus of this design emphasizes the large expanses of land unobstructed by infrastructure and which creates an experience between human and nature, rather than human, technology and the urban. Although the park is car-accessible, the drawings emphasizes of the experience of the walking park-goer. The illustrations focus on cultural moments that help the visitor engage with the re-generation of nature, whether that be through the bird sanctuary, or museum which focuses on artistic works

surrounding the idea of "possibilities." The objective of Hargreaves Associates is to create a space that reminds us of transformation, memory, metamorphosis and ultimately preservation against adversity.

[Fresh Kills] **JOHN MCALAN + PARTNERS**

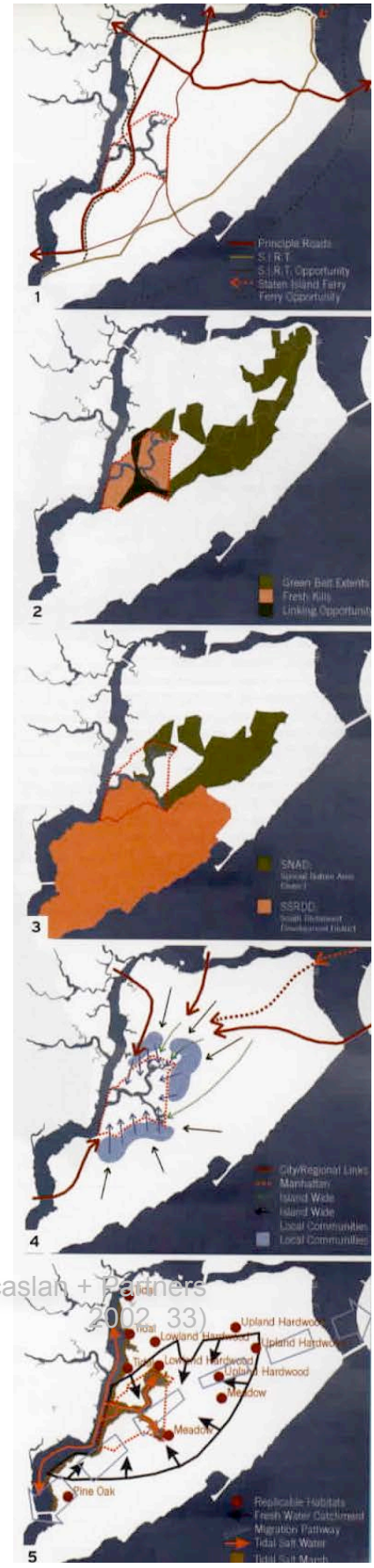
John Mcaslan + Partners began their discussions of Fresh Kills by acknowledge the vastness of the space itself. In their proposal they describe: “The 2,200 acre site is unique: containing a significant area of intact tidal salt marsh (including Fresh Kills Creek, the site’s namesake) together with the largest capped landfill in the world, Fresh Kills generates an immense amount of energy” (Praxis 2002, 35). John Mcaslan + Partners' proposal differs from many for the other designs as they offered a re-conceptualization of Fresh Kills as an object of potential, rather than an its typical depiction as an unfortunate conglomeration of trash.

The team constructed this image of Fresh Kills’ future by placing particular emphasis on revenue that could be generated from the energy within the site. The representation in *Praxis* reveals that no other site in the world has quite the same combination of natural resources and “free” energy. The team constructed an image of the proposed park as a vast system of interconnected resources, which include ecosystems, energy cycles and self-sustaining human activities. The interaction of these systems, both those that are natural and those that require human technologies,

are a constructed synthesis to create an opportunity for the land to restore, renew and reconnect with the urban context (Praxis 2002, 35).

The most unique element of the John Mcaslan + Partners proposal was their interpretation of nature as a spectacle. The idea of the spectacle is used as a mechanism to reincorporate a space of nature into the constructed and lived environment of the city. This idea of the spectacle was revealed through the language John Mcaslan + Partners used to describe their design ideas and implementation. In their design humans interact with nature through the mediation of technology and constructed moments, rather than organically occurring engagement.

At the center of John Mcaslan + Partners design, they describe “a family of unique built environments which interpret the sites resources - nature + energy + people - to create a dynamic experience.” They propose a Migration Center,” a building that focuses on Fresh Kills' position in the Atlantic Flyway, the Energy Center, which highlights emerging technologies and the Earth Center, which uses recycled inorganic waste and composted material to generate native



(John Mcaslan + Partners 2002, 33)

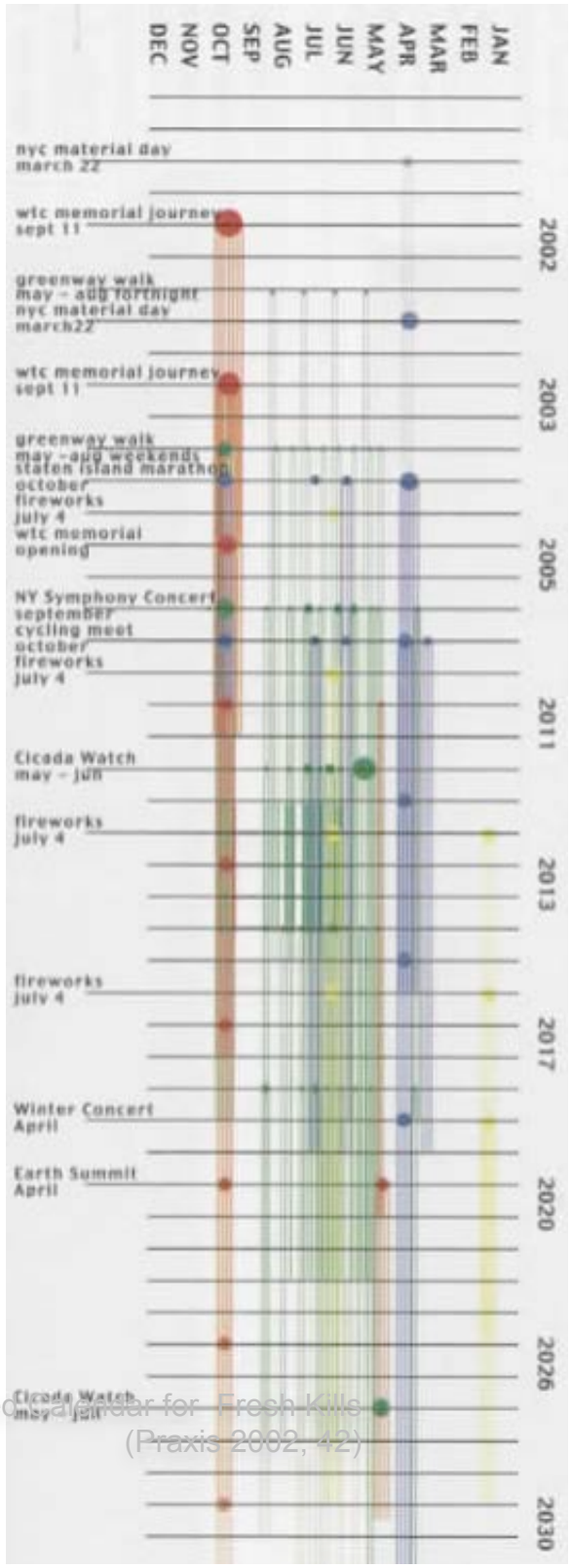
species of plants. Finally the “Eco-Sphere” component represents a synthesis of nature and technology. The Eco Spheres are vast climate controlled enclosures that allow visitors to experience three contrasting environments. These enclosures simulate American the three distinct climate zones of the Atlantic Flyway – subartic, tropical and temperate. This family of structures would be sustained by on-site energy sources. In theory, the Eco-Spheres would be net-zero energy structure, which implies that they would create the same amount of energy that they would use to operate.

John Mcaslan + Partners use the Eco-Spheres as a constructed ecological illusion. This notion of illusion appears as a trend in New York City park design. The first example of this landscaped deception was constructed in Central Park, through the engineered pastoral landscape. The Eco-Sphere uses a similar idea as it creates a space for which the park-goer enters and is transported from the metropolis to the sub-arctic temperatures of Canada or the tropic lush environment of Florida.

In addition to the trend of constructing illusions within these park spaces is the tradition of transformation. As spaces are transformed into beautified illusions, they continue to occupy their identities of the past. These spaces are forced to engage with these identities either consciously, like in the case of the High Line, or subconsciously like in the design of Central Park. John Mcaslan + Partners productively engaged Fresh Kill's past identity as an opportunity for energy. By focusing on the harnessing of energy, John Mcaslan + Partners are able to intervene creatively to create patterns of transformation in an attempt to restore and reconnect this space to New York City.

[DYNAMIC COALITION] by Mathur/Da Cunha + Tom Leader Studio

The Mathur/Da Cunha + Tom Leader Studio focused on two distinct elements in their plan to redevelop Fresh Kills. Firstly, they recognized the space as shifting and transitional, both in terms of its material composition and its representational meaning. Secondly, the team focused on the value of the material diversity embedded in Fresh Kills. The mounds constructed over the latter half of the 20th century contain a dark side of New York's cosmopolitan matter, which manifests itself in physical, political and ecological ways all of which are both settled and unsettled. The Mathur/Da Cunha + Tom Leader Studio recognized that similar to the "settled and unsettled" nature of the physical and representational Fresh Kills, the redesign of this space could not be envisioned as static.The re-conceptualization of Fresh Kills would need to incorporate the multitude of layers and identities that could not be controlled and commanded by society but rather, needed to create an opportunity for discovery.



Proposed calendar for Fresh Kills
(Praxis 2002, 42)

Mathur/ Da Cunha + Tom Leader Studio began their project proposals by first engaging Fresh Kills' material identity. Fresh Kills is a space of wetlands, wilderness, culture, city and utility, all of these elements separate into the dichotomies which seem to define Fresh Kills: green future versus brown past, Staten Island versus New York City and landscape versus landfill. Additionally, the team proposed to use this space as an opportunity to construct a new frontier, one where park-goers can be encourages to live lightly on the earth and engage ideas of the importance of evolving and flexible programs (Praxis 2002, 40).

The design team placed heavy emphasis on the materiality embedded within the space. They begin by underlining the physical layers: the World Trade Center debris, city garbage, marsh detritus, glacial till and crushed rock, which is a result of the Cameron fault line that runs beneath Fresh Kills. Their plan to transform the outer most physical most layer of Fresh Kills did not burying the physical identity of Fresh Kills' past, but rather pulled the identities embedded in the soil into the future. In addition to the physical transformation of Fresh Kills, the team planned two events that would be hosted in the park each year; one, which acknowledges the last barge of trash and the other which recognized the WTC tragedy (Praxis 2002, 40).

Mathur/ Da Cunha + Tom Leader Studio recognized that Fresh Kills could not be returned to the pastoral aesthetic which would ignore the weighted history beneath its soil. Instead the design team took Fresh Kills' material and representational identities of the past and pushed it into the present and future. They acknowledged that Fresh Kills

has the ability to be transformed into a frontier where we, as Americans can engage our past, reflect, and attempt to change the way we make decisions about waste.

[REPARK] by RIOS

Rios Clementi Hale Studios, Los Angeles based firm, emphasized Fresh Kills' ability to transform, evolve and change over time in their plan entitled rePark. The design team engaged ideas of alteration by first defining the eight ecologies of Fresh Kills: walking wetlands, roadside, woodland, tidal wetland, fresh water wetland, commercial bern, landfill mounds and the World Trade Center memorial forest. Rios offered a plan where the multiplicity of ecologies were extrapolating from differing regions of the site and projecting onto a scheduled of program to create as many difference possible sets of contingencies and itineraries. This incorporation of ecologies onto Fresh Kills would create a "new" programmatic surface where the plants, animals humans and appearance would be subject to transform

Transects were overlayed by two New York icons: The Subway System and Central Park. (Praxis 2002, 49)

according to the evolving nature of the site (Praxis 49, 2002).

The eight identified ecologies act as a background for the second organizational principal of the plan, the transects. Transects are conceived as locations for events and programs which may remain in one location for short and long periods of time. The transects concept would allow for a changing landscape, which Rios believed had the ability to evoke “the uniquely American agrarian tradition of working land towards productive use” (Praxis 2002, 49). Both the ecologies and the transects would continuously transform both physiologically and aesthetically rather than being constructed in as a static landscape.

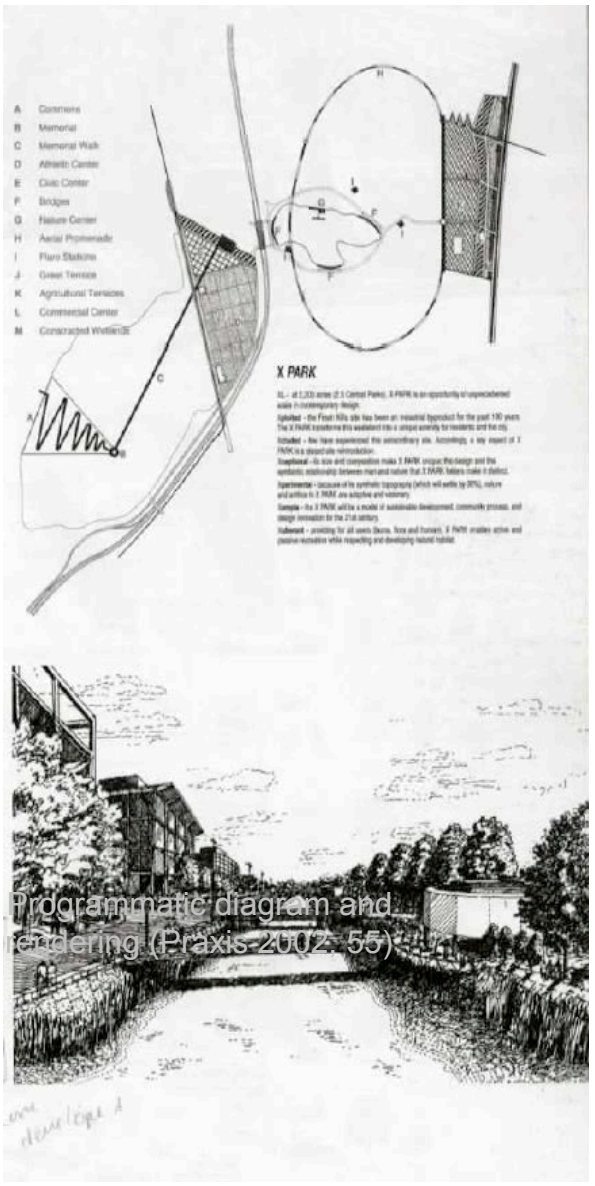
The transect concept, which is the focus of many of the illustrations, was inspired by the New York Subway system. Similar to navigating the subway, the transects provide a multitude of paths from point A to point B, although dissimilar, the transects are able to transform and move (Praxis 2002, 49).

In addition to the transects, RIOS emphasized the eight defined ecologies to create a cultural experience as well as construction of nature. RePark includes a sports complex, bird migration and viewing center, “rePark bus,” a free intra-park amphibious shuttle bus and garden barges, which repurposes sanitation barges as floating gardens (Praxis 50, 2002). RIOS has drawn inspiration for the re-conceptualization of Fresh Kills from the urban environment in which it lays. Themes of the fluidity of the transportation system and the spectacle are both traits that define the identity of New York as a metropolitan center. Through the incorporation of urban elements, RIOS connected Fresh Kills park into the urban fabric by incorporating New York's identity in the context of a construction of nature.

[XPARK] by Sasaki Associates

Similar to many of the entries, Sasaki Associates opened its discussion for the transformation of Fresh Kills by highlighting the identities of the space. Sasaki primarily focused on two distinct identities; Fresh Kills as a marine habitat with tidal waters rich with fish, birds and invertebrate communities and secondly, the site's identity as a brownfield and its potential for reuse (Praxis 55, 2002).

The Sasaki's plan, more so than the plans I have previously discussed, attempted to incorporate Fresh Kills into the urban fabric of New York. They do so by creating a series of access points and corridors to reveal the site in the context of the urban. These access points provide entry for pedestrians, cars, buses, trains and boats. In addition to connecting this space through transportation to New York City, Sasaki took the tradition of New York City park development and integrated classical ideas into their proposed design. Sasaki Associates' plan incorporates a 2.5-mile walk



Programmatic diagram and rendering (Praxis 2002: 55)

that highlights an array of views and experiences similar to the experience of the promenade at Central Park (Praxis 55, 2002).

Sasaki proposed a civic center and commercial district built along the waterfront in addition to new public library, entertainment venues and research institute. This initiative to build up the waterfront was interesting as it indicated Sasaki's conception of nature within New York City as synonymous with development. Through analyzing Sasaki's submission it seemed that Sasaki felt that commercialism Fresh Kills was pivotal in the integration of Fresh Kills into the contextual urban fabric. Sasaki was also the only firm to use black and white to illustrate their ideas of nature. This decision reinforced this de-emphasis of the nature and the stress upon commercial development. Although Sasaki does illustrate the importance of restoring the ecological biodiversity of the site they primarily focus on the need to satisfy human desires through infrastructure (Praxis 2002, 57).

[LIFESCAPE] by Field Operations

Field Operations began its discussion of Fresh Kills by emphasizing Fresh Kills ecological significance. Instead of viewing this space as tarnished and abused, Field Operates provided a plan that acknowledges Fresh Kills multiple identities. This plan placed far more significance on the ecological side of Fresh Kills, as its wetlands ecology is the identity that has been embedded in this space for millions of years rather then its human-imposed identity, which was only consummated in the 20th century.

Field Operations does not only plan to transform Fresh Kills into just a recreational park but rather create a nature reserve where humans and nature interact

within the boundaries of New York City. They believe through this synthesis of human and nature, Fresh Kills as the ability to transform Staten Island's identity. Many spaces that are transformed into parks are often lost in the midst of the urban environment around them. Field Operations believes that with the implementation of their design, Fresh Kills

and greater Staten Island will be able to assume a new identity as an expansive "nature sprawl," comprised of lush vegetation, animals and open space. Once the transformation is complete, Staten Island will be a re-identified as a network of greenways, recreational open spaces and the nature reserve. Field Operations hopes that with the completion of their plan, the nature-lifestyle island brand will be both a destination and envy of the surrounding boroughs. Ecological restoration of this

abused space is a primary concern for Field Operations' re-conceptualization of Fresh Kill.

In addition to adding vegetation, they are determined to reestablish Fresh Kills significance in

the Atlantic Flyway the bird migration route that follows the Atlantic coast. Here, on the coast of New York, Fresh Kills provides a place where many birds reach their most northern limits, while other species reach their southern limit (Praxis 4, 2002). Field Operations are attempting to form a new public ecological awareness and an alternative paradigm of human creativity through an attempt at biomimicry. Field Operations is proposing a design that is informed and guided by time and process rather than form and space.

Each of the submissions presented by the six finalists focused on transforming Fresh Kills within the boundaries of the theme they presented. Despite the wide variation in programmatic themes, each project worked to create a space that atoned for the ecological failings that have plagued the space of Fresh Kills since 1947. They did so by engaging the multiple identities such as the ecological, social and aesthetic identities that are saturated in the space of Fresh Kills. Through these plans, the designers did not just disregard the spaces trash- ridden identity or Fresh Kills distinctiveness as an urban wasteland through the guise of landscape design, but rather engaged its external identity as well as the weighted interior space.

Despite the variations seen in the design submissions, there were some themes present in every submission, for example, the World Trade Center memorial. Fresh Kills landfill had closed just months previous to the attacks of September 11th. As the debris was cleared away from downtown Manhattan, it was placed in Fresh Kills, and the debris from that fateful day was the last load of waste that would be tucked into the bowels of Fresh Kills. The presence of the WTC tragedy at Fresh Kills, forced designers to consider the interior space of Fresh Kill in a must more personal and human way. If

the debris of the WTC center had been shipped out New York to an operating landfill in New Jersey, the space would simply to composed of the waste of New Yorkers, not the emotions, nationalism and pride that went along with the horrific events that occurred on September 11th.

Another theme consistent through each of the submissions was the importance of the ecology of Staten Island. Perhaps the renewal of destroyed habitat seems obvious, but in the context of a capitalistic city, it seems just as likely that the space would be commercially developed. This regeneration of this space falls into the history of New York's need to atone for its ecological failures. This idea of redemption and healing is prevalent throughout all for the submissions board particularly though that stress the importance of bird migration. Those submissions seem to form their concepts of nature around animal life, yet at this point, only some of the small animal species have made their way back on to the abused land.

Through the exploration of these project proposals it is interesting see how each design team engaged this space, a space that to the naked eye is open and untouched, but in reality is less than virginal. Weighted with identity, ecological failures and the tendency to dramatically shift, designers were faced with this challenge to change the a landfill into a landscape, not only through physical rehabilitation but also representational.

Ultimately, the Field Operations with its submission of Lifescape won the competition. Field Operations pushed this idea of returning to nature to its original state without the distraction "eco-spheres" or amphibious vehicles. They emphasized pure nature, which is exactly the opposite of what lies underneath the thin layer of plastic and

soil that separates the park user from the past identity of the space. Perhaps New York's obsession with redemption, the fictional ideas of nature and the potential for successful return to its pure form helped Field Operations win. Field Operations successfully understood what the New York City Parks Department sought out in a competition submission. They wanted New York itself to be represented in this space; New York's natural identity as a ecologically diverse space along with its human imposed urban identity, a space that acknowledges cultural events and asks for New Yorkers to be conscious of their urban environment, both what it does for them and what we can do for it.

CHAPTER FOUR

Identity Transformation of Fresh Kills Park

Field Operations' design for the redevelopment of Fresh Kills aims to rejuvenate the space by not only re-conceptualizing nature but also incorporating the idea of socio-nature. The design team engaged this project by establishing the importance of restoring Fresh Kill's ecosystem, while bringing the social identity of both the space and New York City into the park. As discussed in chapter one, Erik Swyngedouw describes socio-nature as "part natural and part social that embodies a multiplicity of historical-geographical relations and processes" (Swyngedouw 2004, 445). Swyngedouw also explains that it is impossible to separate the ecological and social conditions. This is particularly true in the space of Fresh Kills, where the ecological circumstance is a direct result of social occurrences.

Today, New York City is forced to embrace this dismal space of trash, largely due to the city's efforts to re-brand New York as a global and an entrepreneurial city, which requires the redevelopment of marginalized spaces. Providing green space to improve the livability of the urban is a primary effort for global cities, yet the only spaces left to develop in these dense places are those that have been abandoned or abused. New York has been deemed a global city, which Saskia Sassen describes as the central points for the world economy, and sites for the command, consolidation, and production of firms and their services that operate on a worldwide scale (Sassen 7, 2012). As a result of New York's significance as a financial and cultural center,

Bloomberg has committed New York City to the construction of a particular identity. This identity is comprised of characteristics that reflect functions as well as aesthetics, including but not limited to, city appearance, experience of the city, resident's belief in the city, the inhabitants themselves, and its specialized industries.

In this chapter I discuss the socio-political climate that influenced the design and re-conceptualization of nature in Fresh Kills. I will focus on the redevelopment of New York City's identity as a global city and their efforts to re-brand themselves in the context of the global economy. I will also focus on how both Field Operations and the city of New York work to transform the identity of Fresh Kills from landfill to landscape.

The Entrepreneurial City

I begin by locating Fresh Kills in the context of New York, which has emerged as not only a global city but also what Tim Hall and Phil Hubbard refer to as an entrepreneurial city. They argue that in the new urban form there has been a reorientation of urban governance away from the local provision of welfare and services to a more outward-oriented stance designed to foster local growth and development. The profound changes in the way city's resources are allocated to "place making" and redevelopment as "revitalization" are key elements to the shift to an entrepreneurial city. The ability for a city government o shape urban futures and development should be understood in terms of the social production of government. This movement towards social production proves that cities are not helpless pawns in international capital but

have the capability mediate and direct their destinies by exploiting their advantages over other cities in the global battle for jobs and dollars (Hall and Hubbard 1996, 154-155).

In this climate of the new urban politics and geography, cities are paying closer attention to the notion of "place-making," they do so by increasing their budgets for image construction and advertising (Hall and Hubbard 1996, 161). Today, entrepreneurial cities are using the commodification of their urban identity as a strategy to lure in external investment. In New York City, the Bloomberg administration has taken an initiative to stress the "uniqueness" of the city. This re-imaging the city is a conscious manipulation of city imagery, local cultures and the construction of a new identity. This manipulation of image not only makes the city more attractive to external investors but also plays a role what Hall and Hubbard deem the "social control logic," which convinced as to the benevolence of the entrepreneurial city (Hall and Hubbard 1996, 162). These cultivated city images, cultures and experiences are important to the social and political power of hegemonic groups that ultimately foster civic pride and local support.

Rebranding New York City

New York is branding itself as a global economic and cultural leader. One way which the Bloomberg administration has re-branded New York is through the implementation of PlaNYC - a 30 year plan to create a "greener" and "greater" city. In the context of a growing population, aging infrastructure, a changing climate and an

evolving economy, the future holds inevitable changes for both the physical and social environments of New York City. The ideology behind PlaNYC suggests that the urban has the ability to determine its own future by how it responds to adversity while also and taking precautionary action to adapt to these inevitable changes (PlaNYC 2030 2013).

In addition to the environmental factors that have influenced the development of PlaNYC, there are social and political factors simultaneously at play. David Harvey (1998, 3-17) argues that the entrepreneurial urban landscapes can both 'divert and entertain,' distracting from social and economic problems that threaten the coherence of these newly formed urban regimes. The entrepreneurial landscape – both the real and the constructed imaginary are examples of how regimes are capable of organizing space and mobilizing some semblance of democratic legitimacy to their activities (Hall and Hubbard 1996, 161).

The Bloomberg administration has used PlaNYC to create both real and constructed imagery in the city. Within PlaNYC there are 25 individual programs that aim to make New York a more livable and sustainable city. Examples of individual programs include Million Trees NYC, Air Quality improvements, the creation of sustainability and affordable housing and the improvement of the park system as "parks are among New York's most cherished forms of public infrastructure" (PlaNYC 2030 2013). By improving infrastructure, housing and other components of the physical city, The Bloomberg is simultaneously cultivating an improved intangible identity. PlaNYC not only acts as way to rebrand the city with a "greener" image, but also

creates an environment that provides amenities for the planned population growth of 1 million people in the coming years. The redevelopment of park space is one of the many individual programs that PlaNYC plans to execute. The PlaNYC website describes parks as places for exercise, community forums and catalysts for economic development that help to raise property values. Yet, over two million New Yorkers still live beyond a 10-minutes walk from a park. PlaNYC estimates that by 2030, the city will have acquired or upgraded more than 4,700 acres of parklands and public space throughout the five boroughs. Throughout the website the Bloomberg administration presents the idea of parks as integral to the construction of a livable city, as parks "breath life into neighborhoods" (PlaNYC 2030 2013). With the creation of these constructed improvements in green spaces of New York, the imagery and livability is simultaneously constructed.

Within this plan to reconstruct and rehabilitate park spaces lies Fresh Kills. As discussed in previous chapters, as New York searches for space left "to turn green" the city is left with a dearth of virgin land, and instead must revitalized abandoned, abused spaces such as Fresh Kills landfill.

In order to establish Fresh Kills as a space embraced by the community, New York's Parks Department along with the designers must first reckon with the identity that has defined Fresh Kills for the past 60 years- a massive, dirty, odorous, rat-infested dump. The dumping of nearly 13,000 tons per day for 50 years inevitably affected both the intangible identity for the space and also its surrounding environment through

ground water contamination and air pollution. Although the dump has been closed for 12 years and the smells that once pervaded through Staten Islands on hot summer days have subsided and mechanism are in place to filter ground water, the stigma of Fresh Kills is still ingrained in the minds of New Yorkers.

Health Effects and Contamination

The Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR) conducted a ten-year health assessment, while Fresh Kills was still in operation on the residents living within 1 mile of the landfill. The study was conducted when Fresh Kills was still operating at full capacity, a time when nearly 13,000 tons of New York City waste was hauled into Fresh Kills each day. They examined the correlation between the exposure to numerous air pollutants and health defects. In 1995, the study confirmed that Fresh Kills released more than 100 organic chemicals into the air, in addition to the toxic and metallic dust that is released from on-site operations. The study confirmed that the prevailing winds of Staten Island are likely to blow emissions to nearby neighborhoods and 25 contaminants are of concern.

The environment hazards produced by Fresh Kills have been intrinsically connected with Staten islands identity, however, prior to this investigation it was unclear as to whether the nuisance of odor was directing connected to health defects. The ATSDR found that although a direct correlation was not visible, residents with asthma proved to be more likely to wheeze and cough on days with bad odors. The section

describing air quality in the ATSDR's health assessment concludes that general air quality throughout Staten Island was indeed unhealthy. They note that almost every summer since the 1970's ambient air concentrations of ozone-the primary component of smog have reached unhealthy levels throughout New York City. Exposure to high levels of ozone can lead to respiratory problems like those reported by many of the Staten Island residents living in a close proximity to Fresh Kills landfill (ATSDR 2002).

In addition to the evaluation of the air emission from the Fresh Kills landfill, the ATSDR found that containment high levels of contaminants were also present in the groundwater, surface water, sediment and biota. Researchers found that groundwater was contaminated with trace levels of pollutants that have originated from Fresh Kills. They noted that it is unlikely that residents have come in direct contact with the contaminated water, because ground water on Staten Island has not been used for drinking since the 1970's. Contaminants have been found in the surface water and sediments of Arthur Kill, Fresh Kills and parts of Main Creek and Richmond Creek. The study notes that since recreational use of these waterways is highly restricted, there is minimal exposure to these contaminants and thus not do pose an apparent threat to public health. The study found that some species of fish and shellfish had elevated levels of selected metals and organic compounds. The health assessment stated that since there are commercial and sport fishing restrictions "very few Staten Island residents are likely to eat contaminated fish and shellfish caught in contaminated waters."

The study concluded that trace amounts of contaminants originating from Fresh Kills have been found in the air, groundwater, surface water, sediments, fish and shellfish. Restrictions have been implemented to limit residents contact with contaminated water, fish and shellfish and therefore to do not pose a threat to public heath. In the case of the contaminants found in the air, the study found that although some levels of contaminants have reached unhealthy levels there is no direct correlation between inhalants and adverse health effects (ATSDR 2002).

Throughout ATSDR's assessment, they often noted that contaminants were present in all the places tested, yet they qualified their findings with statements such as "due to restrictions, Staten Island residents are unlikely to come in contact with contaminants." One can infer from their findings and language that Fresh Kills has undoubtedly scarred the land in which it rests upon. As the odors dissipate, the superficial surface is regenerated through a construction of nature, the presence of contaminants will continue to plague both the mind of Staten Island residents and Fresh Kill's identify in its transformation into a safe and green space.

Despite the time that has elapsed since this the closing of the landfill, the negative identity connected to the physical and visual pollution has left the identity of Staten Island tarnished. Staten Island residents endured a half centuries worth of involuntary submission to pollution and deserve a borough that doesn't serve as the city's wastebasket. Initiatives were taken my residents and local politicians to close Fresh Kills and cultivate a positive living environment for the citizens of Fresh Kills.

Closure and Redevelopment of Fresh Kills

Ultimately, Fresh Kills was not closed because it had reached its capacity, it was closed as an appreciative gesture to the residents of Staten Island who helped elect Rudolph Giuliani to make him the first republican mayor since John Lindsey in 1965. Two years after he took office, Giuliani and his fellow republican George Pataki signed an agreement to close Fresh Kills by the end of 2001 (WNYC News blog, 2011).

Closing the landfill had both negative and positive effects. The sanitation department of New York City was using Fresh Kills as a convenient and relatively cheap receptacle, as one ton of trash only cost $43 to dump. When Fresh Kills was closed an interim plan was put into effect; trash was dumped at various locations in Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens where each ton of trash cost $60 to dump. Presently, it costs around $97 to dump New York City trash in out-of state landfills located in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia (Iannucci 2006). More positively, this increase in dumping costs is offset by the closing of landfill that created a toxic environment for millions of New Yorkers. The closure of the landfill has provided a vast space that has presented itself as an economical resource for Staten Island. Additionally, the methane produced by the landfill powers 22,000 homes in Staten Island but it also provides landscape that could be enjoyed by residents (Eddings 2011).

One of the major challenges, which accompanies the re-branding of this space is the disassembly of the identity that already defines the space of Fresh Kills. Particularly

because the re-use of this tarnished space is located within the larger notion of PlaNYC. The constructed identity not only must dismantle the identity of a toxic landfill, fit within Staten Island and while also work to fit within this framework for the future of New York City. Through this re-conceptualization of both the physical and representational Fresh Kills, designers and planners alike are forced to acknowledge the identity of the past, present and future.

Reckoning with Reality

Only planners and designers had the convenience of experiencing the Fresh Kills solely through idealized images. The residents of the Staten islands, who had lived with the landfill for over 50 years felt very differently about the potential of a park atop this space of trash. One resident noted, "For 50 years, they wouldn't want to even associate the name 'Fresh Kills' with anything positive." Others noted that the park name should reflect the space's ability to be rejuvenated from its dismal past. Both Councilman Vincent Ignizio and state Senator Andrew Lanza agreed that the name “Phoenix Park” would be appropriate title for the park atop Fresh Kills, as it reflected the metamorphoses that the space will undergo through its transformation from a landfill to a glorified landscape. Other suggestions were Westfield Park, which was a former name of the township that encompassed Fresh Kills or Burnt Park Island, which marks a small American landing that occurred in that location in 1778. Richmond Park, Citizen’s Park and Staten Island Park were also suggestions. A state assembly candidate, Joe Borelli

suggested that they find a name that predates the stigma of Fresh Kill landfill “almost like a return to some bygone, dump-free day.” The discussion continued, most residents and planners felt that in order to create a successful re-branding of the space the name would both need to acknowledge its past while simultaneously creating a new image. Ultimately, the decision was made to simply condense "Fresh Kills" into “Freshkills.”

The re-naming of the space was only a small challenge embedded within the larger goal of re-branding the space to become a premier park in New York City. Field Operations recognized that the New York City Parks Department felt that the most appropriate use of this large expanse of land was to create a park that represented the future for the city while creating a positive space for all New Yorkers and tourists to enjoy. The goals of this re-designed space are to promote citizen health, biodiversity, while also incorporating education and information that not only acknowledged the site’s past as a landfill, but helped park users understand their own affects on their environment.

In addition to creating a lush, green park equipped with educational and recreational facilities, Field Operations must also incorporate Fresh Kills into this larger context for the entrepreneurial city. The city’s decision to re-develop this tarnish land is directly connected to the construction of New York’s identity as an entrepreneurial city. Conveniently, the act of taking this abused space, that has not only tarnished Staten Island's ecological systems but also its social conditions and transforming it into a space of extreme desirability, the New York Parks Department is atoning for both ecological

and social failures. Although PlaNYC brands itself as a preventative plan to increase the longevity of New York, is some ways it acts as a reactionary plan as it works to correct some of the injustices that have been imposed on the ecological and social layers of New York and specifically Staten Island. The redevelopment of this space operates in this larger context as the rejuvenation New York City works to secures the prosperity of the locality, while simultaneously creating a park which is a representation of rebirth and a movement towards the future.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this project I have explored the notion of public park space, and in particular, Fresh Kills as an evolving entity that is shaped by both natural and cultural processes. It is important to note that by using Fresh Kills as a subject of study it does not limit these ideas to the particular space on Staten Island, but rather represents a larger theme in the public parks of New York City. Within this context, we must view Fresh Kills not as a singular moment, but as a testament to the new aesthetic, which is a product of our time.

Anne Spirn describes the new aesthetic as one that is a dialogue that engages both culture and nature, building on a rich history of antecedents as well as the history of philosophy, art and science. The vast array of focuses within the singular aesthetic recognize both the natural and cultural processes what work together to reveal the rhythms and patterns created by their discourse. This new aesthetic celebrates motion and change of a dynamic process that is able to encapsulate multiple visions, rather than singular, which was a defining feature of more historic landscape design (Spirn 1989, 108).

This kind of design fosters and intensifies the experience of temporal and spatial scales which facilities a type of reflection both in the individual and the context of the larger whole. Spaces such as Fresh Kills provide a place where individuals have the ability to perceive their own lives in relation to the past. The multiple identities of Fresh Kills force the individual to recognize the ability for transformation, reflection and hopefully a new appreciation for the presence of nature within the urban context. As individuals experience this space reflect on this new construction of nature, the city as a

whole also gains a new component of its identity, one in which the values of the residents are clearly embodied.

These moments of creation, such as the re-conceptualization of Fresh Kills, within the context of the urban act as narratives for the construction of the urban identity. The city is comprised of a series of unfolding stories, all of which are evolving in predictable and unpredictable ways. It is the result of the complex and overlapping and interweaving narratives, which create the story of the city. In this case of Fresh Kills, the narrative of change adds to the evolving story of transformation embedded in New York's past, present and future. This new aesthetic applied to Fresh Kills must provide satisfaction on a multitude of levels, it must arouse the five senses, serve as a functional component of the city while simultaneously providing symbolic associations (Spirn 1998, 125). These layers of meaning and feeling all interact on differing layers of complexity and coherence, which together amplify the new aesthetic.

This relationship between experienced aesthetic and the narrative of the city has always been tied to this tradition of park spaces. With the advent of Central Park, Olmsted was able to create a fictitious world through the construction of nature in Central Park. The story constructed through the use of pastoral aesthetics creates an alternative world, free of the intensity of urban chaos into which the park-goer can escape.

As New York transformed and developed it ushered in the industrial revolution; the added infrastructure added yet another layer of narrative to New York's identity. As time progressed, relics of New York's industrial past stood unused. It was not until the elevated west side railroad was threatened by demolition did action to preserve New

York's original infrastructure begin. A group of New York neighbors bound together to form the Friends of the High Line, a group that would go onto support a landscape design project that would alter the trajectory of the New York City park culture. Dissimilar to the pastoral approach which Olmstead had employed 150 years prior, the re-design of the High Line would engage the human element by preserving the industrial relic, rather than diverting the park-goers attention from the urban reality which surrounds them.

Fresh Kills provides the most recent example of the evolving notion aesthetics and Eric Swyngedouw's idea of socio-nature within New York City. Swyngedouw describes socio-nature as "part natural and part social and that embodies a multiplicity of historical-geographical relations and processes" (Swyngedouw 1991, 445). While Fresh Kills provides an example to explore our own cultural and aesthetic values it also provides an example to grapple with the question of the construct of nature. Additionally, how does the reuse of a postindustrial site of complexity affect what is perceived as a natural landscape. And finally, how does the redesign of such a site change the understanding nature and space within a city?

Cities have an obligation to expand in terms of the economy, physical development and population growth, thus with the increase of these various factors of expansion require additional space to develop and dwell. In a place as densely developed as New York City, the only spaces left to transform are marginalized spaces, spaces that have been abused and abandoned. It seems natural that an expanding city would reclaim 2,200 acres of land as a public resource, but the question remains, why transform this dump into a park? With modern technology and engineering techniques it

is possible to bring abused and tarnished land back to life, although the decision to construct this specific type of space holds a symbolic meaning. New York Parks Department has taken a space that for over fifty years operated as the lowest form of the urban and proposed a transformation which will reposition this same space on the opposite end of the urban spectrum. By transforming this dismal space of trash into a constructed and idyllic image of nature, the idea of redemption is inherent.

Nature's representation of a symbol of healing is particularly poignant in this situation because Fresh Kills is a direct consequence of our own material consumption and our desire to avoid and ignore our own waste (Praxis 2002, 59). By transforming Fresh Kills into a beautified space, we, as both the destroyers and creators are able to be identified with the redemption of the space rather than its demise. While a visit to Fresh Kills twenty years ago would illustrate that by burying the contents of Fresh Kills, the physical matter will always remain in Staten Island, by constructing this image of redemption through nature we are able to pretend otherwise. In this urge to purify this tarnished land, many of the competition proposals avoided engaging in Fresh Kills' identity of trash and focus on the regeneration of nature - the symbol of redemption.

This act redemption occurring in the ecological space of wetlands is particularly interesting as it presents a paradigmatic shift in societies views of these spaces. One hundred years ago, wetlands were regarded as the lowest form of nature as they were considered disease ridden and soggy, most wetlands where filled in to create build-able land for commercial or residential development. However, in just three decades there has been a paradoxical shift from societies views of wetlands. They have gone from undesirable to highly valued and protected lands. Spaces where wetlands are naturally

occurring in the urban context are often spaces that have been developed out of necessity and are populated by disadvantaged groups. This inversion in the valuation of wetlands provides an opportunity for the reassessment of amenities in these areas that would otherwise be left unnoticed. Re-valuing wetlands reflects changes in the paradigms of nature, no longer are we able to suggest that once land is built on, destroyed or preserved the land maintains its form, rather there is a continue influx of changes which occur. Linda Pollack notes that a new body of theory reframes nature in terms of its "continual disturbance," suggesting that nature is not in pursuit for equilibrium, but rather exists as a series of disturbances (Pollack 2002, 60). This new paradigm which represents nature as a space of turmoil rather than harmony will help shift representations away from the constructed pastoral image and towards a construction more accommodating of the reality of nature.

While considering this new school of thought surrounding nature, Field Operations was forced to engage the ecological systems across space and time and to develop a framework that could manage and engage the complexity and change over time. They developed a plan for the indefinable, creating a framework where the unanticipated changes that emerge through the maturation of the park can develop. Field Operations engaged this new paradigm of park design where humans can no longer be hidden from the design, but rather the plan for Fresh Kills engages the presence of humans. As noted in the "continual disturbance" theory, nature exists as a result of a series of disturbances; in our modern day, humans are intrinsically connected as the cause of these disturbances, thus concluding that humans are an integral element to the conception of socio-nature which lies within New York city.

Field Operations also reckons with the philosophical dilemma that asks society whether it is possible to conserve nature or whether humans have degraded the environment to such a degree that we are only able to construct it. Field Operations acknowledges that we, as a society, demand productive engagement with nature. By productive, I simply call upon the ideas of socio-nature, in which parks must incorporate an element of culture to be considered desirable places. The idea of ecological atonement requires an intense engagement with the space rather than discarding the space. In the Field Operations master plan of the re-conceptualization of Fresh Kills they create a framework, one which acknowledges humans presence, while also asking humans to reckon with their own ideas of consumption while creating a structure for nature to operate within.

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